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ABSTRACT

The study guide is one of several supplementary materials for a 15-week newspaper course about popular culture in the United States. Course objectives are to help students understand the pervasiveness of popular culture in American society, its historical development, the business aspects of the popular culture industry, the effects of mass media on its nature and quality, the emergence of rock 'n' roll music as a reflection of a growing youth culture, the historical tendency of popular culture to perpetuate false stereotypes of ethnic minorities, and the growing trend toward cultural diversity reflected in new communications systems. The guide integrates the themes of newspaper articles and primary source readings from the accompanying materials. Presentation of learning objectives and discussion of key concepts enable students to pursue the course independently as well as in groups. Divisions in the guide correspond with the four major units in the reader. Each unit in the guide contains a list of appropriate newspaper articles and selections from the reader, learning objectives, overviews of newspaper and reader materials, discussion of key concepts, factual questions, and discussion questions. (Author/AV)

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A STUDY GUIDE FOR COURSES BY NEWSPAPER

John Pendleton, Ph.D.

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CONTENTS

Notes to the Student 2

Course Outline 4

Section One: What Manner of Mirror? 7

Learning Objectives
Overview
Key Concepts
Factual Review Questions
Essay and Discussion Questions

Section Two: Popular Culture and American Institutions 23

Learning Objectives
Overview
Key Concepts
Factual Review Questions
Essay and Discussion Questions

Section Three: Popular Culture and Social Change 37

Learning Objectives
Overview
Key Concepts
Factual Review Questions
Essay and Discussion Questions

Section Four: The Future of Popular Culture 51

Learning Objectives
Overview
Key Concepts
Factual Review Questions
Essay and Discussion Questions

NOTES TO THE STUDENT

The materials for this Course by Newspaper consist of a series of fifteen weekly newspaper articles, which may be thought of as "lectures" by a distinguished faculty; a reader or anthology of articles that supplement the newspaper articles; and this study guide, which is intended to integrate the themes of the newspaper articles and the articles of the reader. A series of audio cassettes, related directly to the newspaper articles, is also available as a supplementary learning aid. For those students who are pursuing this course largely through independent study, the study guide serves in some ways as a substitute for class discussions.

The course has been arranged into four major sections with corresponding divisions in the reader and study guide. A complete course outline appears on page 4.

The study guide is designed to facilitate the learning process for participants in this Course by Newspaper. It is meant as a guide to, not a substitute for, a critical reading and evaluation of the course materials.

Each section of the study guide begins with a list of the newspaper articles and the appropriate supplementary selections in the reader. This is followed by learning objectives for the section—some of the basic understandings of the issues that those who designed the course hope you will develop. The overview for each section is designed to provide the connecting links between articles, emphasizing similarities and differences among the various approaches to common problems. Key concepts highlight some of the major ideas presented in the section, and factual questions will enable you to test your own knowledge of the materials. The discussion questions are designed to test your ability to use the facts in a discussion, as well as to serve as a review and a stimulus to further thought about the topics.

Although each student will discover for himself or herself how best to use the course materials, we would suggest the following approach:

1. Read the newspaper article each week; clip it and carefully save it for future study and review.
2. Glance over the learning objectives, overview, and key concepts in the corresponding section of the study guide. These will call attention to some of the more important points in the newspaper and reader articles and will help to focus your reading.
3. Read the appropriate selections in the reader.
4. Reread the key concepts and overview

more thoroughly this time.

5. Proceed to the factual questions, rereading the articles as necessary to answer them.
6. Consider the essay and discussion questions. Suggested guidelines to answers are provided with each question, although there is, of course, no single "correct" answer.
7. Turn back to the learning objectives. Have you met these goals?
8. Check the bibliographies in the reader for suggestions of further reading on topics of interest.

The problems raised in the course materials are complex, and it is not our aim to come up with simple solutions to these problems. Rather, we have tried to illuminate their very complexity in order to further an understanding of the popular culture that is such a pervasive element in our society today.

OUTLINE FOR POPULAR CULTURE: MIRROR OF AMERICAN LIFE

Section One: What Manner of Mirror?

1. Popular Culture: What Manner of Mirror?
   David Manning White, Professor of Mass Communications, Virginia Commonwealth University
2. Story-Tellers and Story-Sellers: The Makers of Popular Culture
   Herbert Gans, Professor of Sociology, Columbia University
3. Popular Culture: Who Pays?
   George Gerbner, Dean, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania
4. America's Popular Culture: Growth and Expansion
   Ray B. Browne, Director, Center for Popular Culture, Bowling Green State University

Section Two: Popular Culture and American Institutions

5. Hollywood: The Dream Factory
   Robert Sklar, Chairman, Department of Cinema Studies, New York University
6. Television: The Pervasive Medium
   Robert Sklar
7. Popular Culture and Popular Music: Changing Dreams
   Nat Hentoff, Writer, *The New Yorker*, and Columnist, *The Village Voice*
8. Popular Music: Sounds of the People
   Nat Hentoff
9. Sports: The Pleasure of the Flesh
   Robert Lipsyte, Columnist, *New York Post*
10. Sports: Instant Legends and Super Heroes
    Robert Lipsyte

Section Three: Popular Culture and Social Change

11. Politics and Popular Culture
    Andrew Hacker, Professor of Government, Queens College, City University of New York
12. Popular Culture: Minorities and the Media
    Nathan Irvin Huggins, Professor of History, Columbia University
13. Popular Culture: Mirror of Women Moving
    Betty Friedan, Founder of N.O.W. and author of *The Feminine Mystique*
14. Popular Culture and American Life-Styles
    Bennett M. Berger, Professor of Sociology, University of California, San Diego

Section Four: The Future of Popular Culture

15. The Death of the Mass Media?
    Alvin Toffler, Lecturer and Author of *Future Shock*

SECTION ONE:

WHAT MANNER OF MIRROR?

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES	READER SELECTIONS
1. *Popular Culture: What Manner of Mirror!* David Manning White	*Popular Culture: The Multifaceted Mirror* David Manning White *Popular Culture: Notes Toward A Definition* Ray B. Browne *Parameters* Marshall Fishwick *The Popular Arts or the Popular Audience* Russel Nye *America Through the Looking Glass* David Burner, Robert Marcus, Jorj T. Tilson
2. *Story-Tellers and Story-Sellers: The Makers of Popular Culture* Herbert Gans	*Popular Culture's Defects as a Commercial Enterprise* Herbert Gans *Network Nexus: TV's Guardians of Taste* David Grunwald *The Deejays* Arnold Passman *The Electronic Elite Who Shape America's Taste* Benjamin Stein

3. *Popular Culture: Who Pays!*
George Gerbner

The Language of Advertising
Ronald Gross

Who Pays for the News!
Ben Bagdikian

Love Won't Buy You Money
Roger Rosenblatt

Pure Entertainment: Walt Disney Productions, Inc.
Herbert Schiller

4. *America's Popular Culture: Growth and Expansion*
Ray B. Browne

The Discovery of the Popular Culture
Reuel Denney

Comments on Mass and Popular Culture
Oscar Handlin

The Concept of Formula in Popular Literature
John G. Cawelti

Focus on the Western
Jack Nachbar

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To understand

- ☐ the pervasiveness of popular culture in American society
- ☐ the function of popular culture as a mirror of American life
- ☐ the entertainment and diversionary value of popular culture
- ☐ the differences and similarities between "high" and "popular" culture
- ☐ the role of the gatekeepers of popular culture
- ☐ the "active" and "passive" theories of popular culture
- ☐ the business aspects of the popular culture industry
- ☐ the historical development of popular culture
- ☐ the effects of the mass media on the nature and quality of popular culture
- ☐ the main areas of critical response to the rise of popular culture
- ☐ the importance of "formulas" in popular culture
- ☐ the significance of the Western in American popular culture

OVERVIEW

This section defines and analyzes the nature of popular culture and its evolution from the rudimentary story telling and relatively simple life-styles of a preindustrial age to the sophisticated mass media and complex patterns of life in contemporary American society.

The Nature of Popular Culture

The first newspaper article by David Manning White, coordinator of the Courses By Newspaper series on popular culture, outlines the scope of the course. White presents statistics and examples to illustrate the pervasiveness of popular culture in American life. He also introduces the concept of the mirror, which serves as a unifying methodological approach in the course. White concludes his article by urging his readers to strive for an understanding of popular culture rather than seeking to judge it.

White's essay in the reader amplifies his basic arguments and offers more detailed evidence of the omnipresence of popular culture in American society. He also discusses the complex notion of the "mirror" at greater length.

White zeroes in on the chief complaint leveled against popular culture by elitist critics. It is not "media *per se* that trouble those who denounce popular culture," observes White, "as much as the way other people with a

lower cultural IQ use these media." But, as the author indicates, even well-educated people partake of cultural offerings that are considered "inferior" by the defenders of elite culture. While it may seldom edify us, popular culture offers great recreational benefits and can be a much-needed salve for people's tired minds and bodies.

The selection by Ray Browne in the reader discusses the problems of reaching a clear-cut definition of popular culture. Generally speaking, the popular artist tends to restate "the old and accepted," while the creator of high culture is more concerned with expressing his own ideas in a highly individualized fashion. There are exceptions, of course, and, as Browne observes, the "lines of demarcation" between the various types of culture are very indistinct. The author concludes by arguing for inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness in scholarly attempts to define popular culture.

Marshall Fishwick's musings on the "pop revolution" provide additional insights into the nature and importance of popular culture in American society. He points to the fact that the icons of the media, such as the CBS Big Eye, are instantly recognizable to most Americans and rival, if they do not surpass, the dominance of religious symbols in our culture.

Russell Nye's article contributes a historical dimension to the reader selections on the meaning of popular culture. Nye notes the convergence of several important factors in the late nineteenth century that stimulated the growth of a popular culture that had been established by the mid-eighteenth century. According to Nye, "popular art is folk art aimed at a wider audience" and is significant, in this regard, because popular art "confirms the experience of the majority." Popular art can thus be viewed as a valuable cultural barometer that indicates existing values and preoccupations and is sensitive to any changes in those areas.

The selection by David Burner, Robert Marcus, and Jorj Tilson also gives some historical context to the discussion of popular culture. The authors' definition of "culture" as "the way experience is subjectively organized" helps distinguish it from "society," which implies the institutional structure we live in. The article picks up on points suggested by the previous four selections on the need to suspend aesthetic judgments in order to study popular culture. Finally, the authors emphasize that popular culture is an active, as well as passive, enterprise, a pool of materials that people use "to give meaning to their experience."

Creators and Gatekeepers

The second theme explored in Section One concerns the creators and "gatekeepers" of our popular culture, those who fashion the products and those who determine what will ultimately be "sold" to the consumers. The newspaper article by Herbert Gans serves to introduce this theme.

Gans offers some insights into the process of creating popular cultural fare. He observes that most of the creators are white, middle-aged, well-educated males, and that their creations are group efforts, in the sense that those who stand at the "gates" of the popular culture industries (the executives and "censors") make the final decisions on content. Gans also delineates the two basic interpretations about popular culture: the "passive" theory that views popular culture as a mirror of American needs and preoccupations, and the "active" theory that emphasizes the tastemaker role of popular culture. Gans does

not gravitate to either camp, offering a more modest conclusion, that "the popular culture makers divert us because we want to be diverted." In other words, there is more mutual interaction than either of the two theories suggests.

The reader selection by Gans refutes three of the major criticisms of popular culture creators: that they are profit-seeking; that they must make homogeneous, standardized "products"; and that their "craft" turns them into the artistic equivalent of assembly-line workers. Gans illustrates that popular and high culture actually have much in common.

Benjamin Stein focuses on the "creative elite" of television and makes a strong case for their immense power in transmitting their personal attitudes and prejudices through the images and stories they create for television. In essence, the elite mirrors its environment, reflecting the values, ethos, and experience of the Los Angeles media empire.

The task of television "censors" is the subject of David Grunwald's essay. In spite of all the furor over the effects of television on the audience, Grunwald sees it as one of the most conservative of the mass media. It is a big business, designed to "deliver" viewers to the advertisers, and the so-called censors are employed to make sure offensive material does not flow through the gates. According to the three network censors interviewed by Grunwald, television actually tries to achieve a "diversity of presentation," a statement that Benjamin Stein would no doubt take issue with.

The final selection on the creators and gatekeepers of popular culture is Arnold Passman's account of the disk jockey as a prominent figure in radio. Although the medium is definitely changing, as computers enable stations to present more music and less talk, the disk jockey is still a significant gatekeeper. Passman sees the disk jockey in both lofty and mundane lights, as akin to the primitive shaman of tribal cultures or simply as an "electronic extension" of the traveling salesman.

Popular Culture as Big Business

George Gerbner's newspaper article begins the discussion of popular culture as a commercial enterprise. Gerbner emphasizes the shift in "public story telling" from the personal face-to-face process of preindustrial times to the development of "new machines" owned by wealthy men who could mass produce "stories" for a huge audience. This transformation led to the creation of new corporate elites, with advertisers becoming the "patrons" of the "art" they created. These corporations are essentially "private governments," according to Gerbner, but he indicates that the future may bring about more diversification, thus limiting the power they now enjoy.

Advertising, of course, is the cornerstone of the popular culture business. Rather than simply detailing the extent of advertising in this country, Ronald Gross examines the language of those who try to sell us everything under the sun (and perhaps *even* the sun when solar energy becomes a widespread commodity). If they simply tried to "wheedle out of us a few greasy quarters or dollars," Gross declares, the advertisers would not be of much interest. But advertising techniques have spread to other areas of domestic and foreign policy, and it behooves us to try to understand the mentality of the ad men.

It is generally assumed that we pay our 15 cents for a newspaper and receive our televi-

sion news free. Ben Bagdikian explodes this myth and illustrates, with extensive statistical information, that the consumer actually pays a great deal for his newspaper and television news by supporting advertisers. Whenever one purchases a product, he inevitably gives sustenance to advertising campaigns because the cost of advertising is reflected in the price of a particular product.

The book publishing industry, which has recently been boosted by such best-sellers as *Roots*, is the subject of Roger Rosenblatt's incisive look at the phenomenon of Erich Segal's novel, *Oliver's Story*. Rosenblatt perceives a definite formula at work in the process of writing, promoting, and selling a best-selling book. And, as Rosenblatt observes, the formula has not changed much over the past sixty years, a fact that does not speak too highly of this aspect of popular culture.

The Disney empire epitomizes popular culture as a commercial enterprise. The reader selection by Herbert Schiller presents a vivid picture of this example of "modern conglomeration." Especially noteworthy is Schiller's observation that the Disney empire skillfully uses one medium, such as television, to promote other aspects of its enterprise, such as its parks and films.

The final theme discussed in Section One concerns the question of "change and continuity" in American popular culture, how much has endured over the years and how much has been altered by the advent of new technological forms of communication and information. The newspaper article by Ray Browne argues for a continuity in popular culture because it has "always responded to and reflected life in this country." Browne details some of the main themes of the "American Way of Life" (a concept to be explored in more detail in the reader selection by John Pendleton in Section Three), that are mirrored in popular culture. The author acknowledges that the ideals seldom matched the reality of American life. He concludes by declaring, in a manner similar to Herbert Gans' conclusions in his newspaper article, that entertainment is the "single most overriding drive in American popular culture." Sophisticated technology, in Browne's estimation, has simply created more complex modes of entertainment.

The selection by Reuel Denney discusses some of the major patterns of critical response to the development of popular culture. Denney also touches on some of the key changes that have taken place in the rise of popular culture. While he might agree with Browne that much of the content and nature of popular culture has remained essentially the same, he would point to some of the definite, if somewhat subtle, transformations that have occurred, such as the "deverbalization" of newspapers.

Oscar Handlin is in even stronger opposition to Browne's point of view. He sees the development of the mass media as a disruptive element in the world of popular culture. Before the mass media, according to Handlin, there existed great rapport between the entertainer and the audience, and popular culture was "closely related to the felt needs and familiar modes of expression of the people it served." Popular culture in the mass-mediated society, on the other hand, lost these distinguishing features. The article on rock 'n' roll by Carl Belz (in Section Two) contradicts Handlin's assumptions about modern popular culture, but the points made by Handlin seem valid, if somewhat overstated.

John Cawelti, like Roger Rosenblatt, looks

to the "formula" approach to popular culture as a valuable methodological tool in understanding the entertainment of the masses. Unlike Handlin, Cawelti sees great similarities between the content of popular stories a century ago and those today. He argues that there are recurring types of stories that hinge upon some basic formula, that is, a "conventional system for structuring cultural products." The formula approach is important to the theme of "change and continuity" because it allows us to examine what ideas, attitudes, and values continue to be reinforced and how they have changed in their expression to meet changing cultural needs.

The final selection in Section One concerns the most prolific American formula story—the Western. Jack Nachbar, in fact, sees the Western as "the most important American story form of the twentieth century." There is little doubt that the Western ethos permeates much of our social and intellectual life. In this sense, the Western, while it has undergone some slight changes over the years, is evidence that at least one facet of our popular culture has remained essentially the same, from the popular literature of the nineteenth century to the television programs and movies of today.

KEY CONCEPTS

"High" vs. "Popular" Culture

Popular culture as a "culture of the people" has existed since the earliest organization of human beings into society. Most scholars have referred to these preindustrial cultures as "folk" cultures and have contrasted them with the "official" culture of the elites who ruled societies. The high and folk cultures managed to coexist because neither posed a threat to the other.

With the rise of the middle class as a major social force in the newly industrialized nations, a popular culture emerged. This "new" culture had roots in the cultural expressions of the "folk," but it was closely tied to the entertainment businesses made possible by the development of technological devices such as the printing press.

Unlike the earlier folk cultures, this popular culture was perceived by the elite class as a distinct danger. By the late nineteenth century, the entrenched guardians of high culture had taken the offensive against the upstart popular culture. As Oscar Handlin observes in his article, the elitists defined "culture" in the very narrow sense of the "finest" artistic and intellectual expression. Anything not "officially approved" by the custodians of high culture was thought to be of inferior quality and not worthy of the interest of "refined" and educated individuals.

This kind of cultural elitism also permeated academic life. With some notable, but very rare, exceptions, scholars refused to consider popular culture a subject of serious inquiry. Their objections to popular culture, as the articles by White, Gans, Nye, and others point out, generally echoed the aesthetic judgments of the nineteenth-century elite. The intellectual community tended to think of popular culture as "debasing" and as

a potential threat to society due to its alleged ability to promote mediocrity in all areas of American life.

Reuel Denney's article discusses some of the major responses to the critics of popular culture. While many of them shared the reservations of Dwight Macdonald and others as to the aesthetic worth of popular culture, they argued that the cultural expressions of the vast majority of the people must be given scholarly attention.

The impact of motion pictures in the 1930s stimulated a rash of scholarly books on the social significance of film. The question of what effects popular culture had on its audience became a new topic of debate in the academic world, reaching a fever pitch in the last twenty years in the controversy over the impact of television violence on the viewing public.

Despite the continuation of academic assaults on popular culture, the field of study is currently an accepted, if not completely respected, area of scholarly endeavor in most universities and colleges.

Popular Culture as a Source of Entertainment and Diversion

A fact virtually ignored by the critics of popular culture is that the masses look for a variety of benefits in the process of participating in popular culture. Unlike the devotees of high culture, those who partake of popular culture seldom concern themselves with being uplifted aesthetically and intellectually. As White observes in his articles, they generally seek enjoyment, pleasure, recreation, entertainment, diversion from their popular culture. Of course, they also seek information, instruction, and an occasional emotional, intellectual, or aesthetic experience from their culture, but they are not as demanding or selective as the elitists. They usually accept what popular culture has to offer and seldom complain unless something is especially objectionable.

As Browne, Gans, and others note, the entertainment and diversionary value of popular culture seems to be the overriding goal of those who enjoy the products of popular culture. Although many students of popular culture are concerned that so many people apparently do not take popular culture seriously, it must be noted that the *choice* of what entertainment or what diversion a person favors actually reveals a great deal about the individual's values, attitudes, preoccupations, and priorities. When a substantial number of people share the same tastes in popular cultural pastimes, we can also make some tentative assumptions about the nature of society in general.

The Creators and Producers of Popular Culture

One of the significant features of Section One is its examination of who actually creates and produces the popular culture we consume. Unlike the high culture artist, the creator of popular culture must gear his efforts to satisfying a highly diversified audience of anonymous individuals. While the popular artist may wish merely to express his feelings or ideas, he is obliged, if he wants to be successful commercially, to cater to the tastes and preoccupations of that unseen public.

The process of creating popular culture is not an individual endeavor, however. The creator is aided (or hindered, depending on your point of view) by a host of "associates," ranging from editors and publishers (or network executives) to agents, public relations people, and that ubiquitous group, the spon-

sors. As Gans puts it in his newspaper article, the creators of popular culture are basically *story-tellers* and the producers are *story-sellers*.

The creative and production functions also include the role of the *gatekeeper*, who has a part in both activities. The term refers to those who stand at the gates of the media empires, so to speak, and who determine what will and what will not be allowed to reach the public. The articles by Stein and Grunwald illustrate just how powerful a handful of individuals can be in choosing the content of the television programs we watch. The same applies to newspapers, radio, and other media, of course, but television gatekeepers possess the greatest potential to influence the thoughts and behavior of the public because of the concentration of power in the three networks and the ability of television to reach such a vast audience.

The "Passive" and "Active" Theories of Popular Culture

The concept of the mirror used in this course is, roughly speaking, a "passive" theory of popular culture. It holds that the prevailing ideas, attitudes, values, preoccupations, and priorities of a society are reflected through its popular culture. The justification for this theory usually stems from an assumption that, in order to be popular, a cultural offering must exploit public tastes and concerns and reinforce the dominant intellectual temper and values of the people. Terms such as "barometer" and "indicator" are similar to "mirror" as methodoligical concepts.

The "active" theory, on the other hand, places a great deal of emphasis on the ability of popular culture, especially as it is disseminated through the mass media, to literally mold people's values, tastes, and life-styles. The furor over the effects of television violence on the audience (a theme that will be explored in more detail in Section Two) indicates that many people subscribe to the "active" theory of popular culture. Another group that accepts the theory, but which is a rather small segment of the population, is the radical social and political theorists such as Herbert Marcuse, who believe that popular culture is so powerful that it can siphon off any form of dissent and render it ineffective. The reader selection by John Pendleton in Section Three has some discussion on this point of view.

The newspaper article by Herbert Gans contains the best discussion of the "active" and "passive" theories of popular culture, but many of the reader and newspaper articles allude to them.

Commercialism

As many of the newspaper and reader articles point out, popular culture is a decidedly commercial enterprise. In many respects, the growth of popular culture developed very naturally as a manifestation of an expanding industrial country. The tendency to think in terms of production, promotion, and salesmanship that marked so much of American life inevitably became part of the popular culture business. As the Gerbner newspaper article indicates, the production of stories and other forms of entertainment and diversion was thought to be simply another area of industry.

Some people, however, believe that culture, by its very nature, must be free of the stigma of commercialism. They think of culture, as Handlin's reader selection points out, as intellectual and artistic expression. To put a price tag on those offerings is to debase

them. This concern, however, flies in the face of the very people who create and produce popular culture. In spite of the many declarations of artistic integrity and intellectual independence, most of the artists and producers, the "story tellers" and the "story sellers," seek financial reward. In this respect, they are no different from their fellow Americans who toil at jobs in order to make a living.

While it is true that the commercial nature of popular culture may result in aesthetically inferior products being peddled to an uncultivated and nonselective audience, it must be remembered that the popular culture of a nation reflects the nature and quality of the society, as the mirror concept suggests. To ask popular culture to be less commercialistic, therefore, is putting the cart before the horse. The American people must change their values and priorities before popular culture can change to meet this new public mood.

The Impact of Mass Media on Popular Culture

While certain themes and story forms have remained essentially the same over the years, the mass media has had some profound effects on the tone of American life. Although Handlin's dire assessment that popular culture is irrelevant to the lives of Americans may be unduly pessimistic, his observation that huge conglomerates create cultural products for an anonymous audience would appear quite valid. This has not created, but it certainly has furthered, the growing impersonality of American life. The word "alienation" has become almost a cliché because it seems to be so appropriate a description for the dilemma of many of our citizens.

The impact of the mass media can also be seen in the trend toward "deverbalization" that Denney discusses in relation to the newspaper of the late nineteenth century. One does not have to accept Marshall McLuhan's hypotheses completely to realize that words are not as important in contemporary communication. Images, symbols, icons, and other forms of visual representation have become increasingly dominant in our society. It is doubtful whether many people totally mimic the actors they see on the silver screen, but motion pictures, and perhaps even more television, have allowed people to copy behavior mannerisms and appearances and incorporate them into their own personal identities. The phenomenon of Farrah Fawcett-Majors is only the most recent example of this effect of mass media in American society.

The controversy over the effects of television has yet to be resolved, if indeed it ever will be, but it is obvious that those who watch a great deal of television often develop different personality traits from those who read a great deal and view little television. Television has also had some definite, though not yet completely understood, influence on people's views of human nature and social life. And, finally, television has infinitely increased public awareness of social problems and international issues, although the average American has little more than a superficial comprehension of those problems and issues. (The articles by Patterson and McClure and Small in Section Three contain discussions germane to this theme.)

FACTUAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. According to White's newspaper article, what adjective best describes popular culture?
2. What is it, according to White's reader article, that disturbs elitists most about popular culture?
3. What effects has the ascendancy of television had on the popularity of older media forms?
4. Generally speaking, how do the artistic motivations of a high culture creator differ from those of a popular entertainer?
5. What are the three meanings of "pop," according to the Fishwick selection?
6. What were the six key factors responsible for the rise and rapid growth of American popular culture?
7. What, in the estimation of Nye, are the major requirements for success as a popular artist?
8. What, according to Burner, Marcus, and Tilson, have been the major impediments to the study of popular culture?
9. Why does Gans, in his newspaper article, assert that popular culture makers "appeal to already existing tastes"?
10. What are the three major criticisms of popular culture creators discussed by Gans in the reader selection?
11. Describe the "L.A. view of life" that the creative elite of television presents.
12. What is the main function of television "censors"?
13. How do radio disk jockeys function as cultural gatekeepers?
14. What was the shift in "public story telling" detailed by Gerbner in his newspaper article?
15. What are the three main factors that have enabled advertising to become such an enormous part of popular culture?

16. What do advertisers do, according to Gross, to "fabricate a subject matter for their advertisement other than the product itself"?

17. Why is the notion that television news is free and newspapers cost the reader only the purchase price erroneous?

18. What are the key features of the best-seller formula analyzed by Rosenblatt?

19. How does the Disney empire epitomize "modern conglomeratization"?

20. Why does Browne, in his newspaper article, argue that popular culture has remained essentially the same over the years?

21. What does Browne consider the "single most overriding drive in American popular culture"?

22. What major effect did the massive waves of immigration from 1880 to 1920 have on the nature of popular culture?

23. How did World War I influence European attitudes toward American popular culture?

24. What features distinguished pre-mass media popular culture from high culture?

25. Why does Handlin consider contemporary popular culture irrelevant to the lives of most Americans?

26. How does Cawelti define "formula," as it applies to popular culture?

27. In what ways are formulas similar to games?

28. Why does Nachbar consider Westerns "the most important American story form of the twentieth century"?

ESSAY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Examine the roles of popular culture as a mirror of American life and as a molder of public values and tastes.

Suggested Guidelines

1. Consult the newspaper articles by White and Browne and the reader selections by White, Nye, Burner, and Cawelti to determine the meaning of the mirror concept.
2. Consider the newspaper articles by Gans, especially his discussion of the "passive" and "active" theories of popular culture, and Gerbner, and the reader selections by Grunwald, Stein, and Gross.
3. Use your own experiences with popular culture to help you assess the extent to which popular culture is a mirror and a molder of American society.

2. Analyze the relationship between the creators, gatekeepers, and producers of popular culture and the audience that consumes their products.

Suggested Guidelines

1. Note Handlin's and Nye's observations on the problems the popular artist faces in using the mass media.
2. Consider the point made by Gans, in his reader selection, on the differences between the way creators and users view culture.
3. Based on your personal observations and what you have read, decide whether the creators and users of popular culture have made significant attempts to communicate more effectively with one another.

3. Discuss the benefits and liabilities of popular culture as a commercial enterprise.

Suggested Guidelines

1. Review the newspaper article by Gerbner and the reader selections by Gross, Bagdikian, Rosenblatt, and Schiller.
2. Consider the capacity of commercially based culture to reach an enormous audience, compared to the patron-supported high culture of preindustrial societies that was restricted to a very small elite class.
3. Examine the implications of a non selective culture in which everything is packaged and sold as a commodity.

4. Discuss the impact of the mass media on the nature and quality of popular culture.

Suggested Guidelines

1. Review the discussions of the historical development of popular culture in the newspaper article by Browne and in the reader selections by Nye, Cawelti, and Denney.
2. Consider Handlin's comments on the disruptive effect of the mass media on popular culture.
3. Compare White's and Gans' generally favorable attitudes toward the benefits of the mass media of communication and information with the somewhat critical views of Gerbner, Gross, Schiller, and Bagdikian.

SECTION TWO:

POPULAR CULTURE AND AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES	READER SELECTIONS
5. *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* Robert Sklar	*Windows on a Made-up World* Robert Sklar *Hollywood Harakiri* William Paul *Jaws in Retrospect* Martin S. Dworkin
6. *Television: The Pervasive Medium* Robert Sklar	*The Scary World of TV's Heavy Viewer* George Gerbner and Larry Gross *What TV Does to Kids* Harry F. Waters *Roots on TV: It Touched Us All* Peter Schillaci *Eyewitless News* Ron Powers *Millennial Dreams and Nibblers* Robert Louis Shayon

7. *Popular Culture and Popular Music: Changing Dreams*
   Nat Hentoff

   and

8. *Popular Music: Sounds of the People*
   Nat Hentoff

What Is Popular Music? A Definition
R. Serge Denisoff

Rock as Folk Art
Carl Belz

Something's Happening and You Don't Know What It Is
Nat Hentoff

Singing Along with the Silent Majority
John D. McCarthy, Richard A. Peterson, and William L. Yancey

Age of Pretty Pop
Robert Hilburn

9. *Sports: The Pleasure of the Flesh*
   Robert Lipsyte

   and

10. *Sports: Instant Legends and Super Heroes*
    Robert Lipsyte

SportsWorld
Robert Lipsyte

The Super Bowl: Mythic Spectacle
Michael Real

Sports: The Natural Religion
Michael Novak

"Glory, Glory, Hallelujah": The New Patriotism and Sports
Jerry Izenberg

Middle America Has Its Woodstock, Too
Jeff Greenfield

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To understand

- ☐ the extent to which movies provide insights into the nature of American life
- ☐ the rise and decline of the motion picture industry
- ☐ the effects of television on American society
- ☐ the blurring distinction between information and entertainment in television news programs
- ☐ the emergence of rock 'n' roll music as a reflection of a growing youth culture
- ☐ the popular music trends of the late sixties and the seventies as a reaction to the cultural rebellion reflected by rock 'n' roll
- ☐ the manner in which sports mirror the values of American society
- ☐ the significance of ritualism to the popularity of sports

OVERVIEW

Section Two in the anthology focuses on four types of American entertainment—motion pictures, television, popular music, and sports—as major social institutions that both mirror and mold the nature of American culture.

Movies

The newspaper article by Robert Sklar that begins the section on movies highlights the importance of movies in American life. Sklar discusses the psychological meaning of watching motion pictures as a kind of common denominator of the film experience. The article traces the history of movies, from their origins as entertainment for the urban, often immigrant, working class to their current status as "spectacles" that seem to Sklar to be increasingly out of touch with the realities of American society.

Sklar's concluding comments in his newspaper article are picked up and amplified in his selection in the reader. The thrust of Sklar's essay is that movies are not really mirrors of the American experience. They are simply "about themselves" and can be better understood as "windows" that allow us to "look into" the minds of those who run the industry and to occasionally catch a glimpse of what it means to live in American society.

The selection by William Paul gives a very good assessment of the motion picture industry as a business, tracing both its rise to power and its decline as a major commercial enterprise. Paul analyzes the impact of television as well as other key factors that have contributed to the demise of the movie industry as the preeminent power in popular culture. In a manner similar to Sklar, Paul bemoans the current state of movies that seem to be little

more than superficial "events" designed to reap box-office receipts.

The generalizations made in the Sklar and Paul essays are given specific support in Martin S. Dworkin's article on the phenomenon of *Jaws*. The hoopla surrounding the release of the film represents the current trend in the movie industry toward the "blockbuster" that could keep the studios in the black. Dworkin's analysis also includes some important insights into the entire realm of popular culture in America.

Television

Turning to television, Robert Sklar, in his second newspaper article, builds on the point made at the conclusion of his newspaper article on movies, about the importance of television in telling us "who we are." He notes that major technological advances have always stimulated heated controversy about their social effects, but he contends that television's "impact on society may be so much greater than that of any other device as to make comparisons irrelevant."

The reader selection by George Gerbner and Larry Gross offers some very convincing evidence of the impact of television, particularly on those the authors label "heavy" viewers. Perhaps most noteworthy is the hypothesis that those who watch a lot of television tend to think the world is much more dangerous and violent than it actually is. In this respect, the authors conclude that television may function very much like the church once did in America, as an institution that could generate respect for established authority by instilling fear into the people.

The *Newsweek* article by Harry F. Waters presents even more diversified information on the effects of television on the viewing audience. He discusses both the tendency of television to arouse aggressive feelings and the capacity of the medium to foster passivity. The public outcry against excessive violence in television programming is also considered.

In contrast to all of the other reader essays on television, the selection by Peter Schillaci emphasizes the valuable social contributions television can make. The article presents a case study of the television series based on Alex Haley's novel *Roots* to illustrate this assertion. Schillaci notes that in addition to increasing public awareness of the black experience in America, *Roots* was truly a "unique media event" because the producers managed to sustain a very powerful ad campaign and to schedule the programs very skillfully so that a certain momentum or "build" was created.

Pulitzer Prize-winning TV critic Ron Powers sees little to applaud in the way many television stations handle their news programs. The current trend of "eyewitness" (or "eyewitless," to use Powers' epithet) presentations has made network journalism little more than a slick format for entertainment. Powers particularly dislikes the fact that those who watch these programs do not realize "what information is *left out* of a newscast to make room for the audience-building gimmicks and pleasant repartee." Powers' observations recall the points made by Gans and White about the "gatekeepers" of popular culture who exert tremendous control over what is presented to the public. The Powers selection also adds another dimension to the discussion of news reporting in Bagdikian's article in Section One.

Like most of the other authors in the section on television, Robert Shayon has serious reservations about the role of the medium in American society. Shayon is especially con-

cerned about the problem of identity in our culture and how television, by fostering passive reception of messages, aggravates that problem. This question of the relationship between audience and entertainer has already been introduced in Section One, in articles by White, Nye, Handlin, and others and will be looked at again in a much different fashion in the science fiction article by Lafferty in Section Four.

Popular Music

Nat Hentoff begins the section on popular music with his first newspaper article. He presents an overview of the role of popular music as a mirror of the American experience and introduces the importance of rock 'n' roll as a purveyor of cultural rebellion. His second newspaper article delves into some theoretical questions about the nature of popular music and points to the history of criticism of popular music that reveals how some segments of American society have resented the culture of the masses. This theme, of course, has been discussed in detail by White, Fishwick, and others in Section One.

The reader article by R. Serge Denisoff presents a concise definition of popular music and discusses the difficulties those in the industry face in trying to appeal to a diversified audience. The article by Nye in Section One introduced this theme, but Denisoff's article provides a good specific example to aid the student's understanding of the problems confronting the creators of popular culture. According to Denisoff, the "formula for a hit popular record remains elusive," recalling Gans' assessment of entertainment makers as "nervous guessers" about what the public wants.

The selection by Carl Belz deals with rock 'n' roll, specifically with how it can be considered a legitimate folk art. Belz amplifies some of the points made by Browne and others in Section One about the distinctions between high, popular, and folk culture. Belz notes that the reasons for the origins of rock, which the author sees as a response to the needs of a growing youth culture, illustrate the true folk art characteristics of the music.

Hentoff's reader essay examines the importance of rock as a major stimulus to, and reflector of, the movement of rebellion that came to be called the counterculture. This movement will be discussed at more length in Section Three, in the newspaper article by Bennett M. Berger and the reader selection by Pendleton. Hentoff notes the effects of "cultural outsiders" on the world of popular music and on the world view of white, middle-class youth as important elements in the cultural rebellion that began to take on major proportions in the mid-sixties.

The article by John D. McCarthy, Richard A. Peterson, and William L. Yancey presents a sociological study of country and western music. The authors note that the music definitely mirrors very conservative values and attitudes, but that there is an underlying liberal sentiment, especially in economic matters, in many of the songs. The article also discusses the fact that country and western came to be considered, at least by the "silent majority," the true music of America and was used, in many respects, as a much-needed counterpoint to the rebellious world of rock.

The final selection on popular music, by Robert Hilburn, deals with the trends of the seventies, especially with the recent tendency of "prettiness" to be a dominant feature of popular singers. This contrasts sharply with the counterculture characteristics of rock discussed by Hentoff. Hilburn's assessment of the current popular music scene in-

dicates that those who embraced country and western music were not the only "backlash" against the rebellious quality of rock in the late sixties.

Sports

Robert Lipsyte's two newspaper articles on sports outline the major qualities of professional athletics in America and the central questions we should be asking about the world of sports. In the first article, Lipsyte zeroes in on some of the important social, cultural, and psychological factors involved in spectator sports. In the second article, he looks at Muhammad Ali, Billie Jean King, and Joe Namath as representatives of important developments in the world of sports during the past two decades.

Lipsyte's reader selection presents a rather scathing attack on what the author calls the "SportsWorld" mentality. The emphasis on winning particularly distresses Lipsyte. He also notes that, contrary to popular opinion, sports have not really helped blacks advance toward social equality. Women, according to Lipsyte, may learn from the "sorry lesson" of black participation in sports and escape some of the same traps.

Michael Real does a case study of the Super Bowl to make his points about sports as symbol and ritual in American society. Real gives a great deal of credit to the wedding of electronic media and spectator sports as a stimulus to the increasing importance of spectacles such as the Super Bowl. He also notes, however, that the football extravaganza is a game and, in this sense, is doubly attractive to Americans, who can find both emotional release and high cultural significance in watching the Super Bowl.

The idea of sports as a "civil religion" is discussed in the selection by Michael Novak. The author notes that Americans think of themselves as a special people—an observation made by Ray Browne in his newspaper article in Section One—and that this inflated sense of self-importance carries over into their games. Like Real, Novak sees great ritualistic significance in the world of sports. But Novak goes even further in his thesis that sports have actually surpassed religion in the lives of a great number of Americans as their central spiritual experience.

The notion of the mirror in popular culture has appeared frequently in this anthology. The essay by Jerry Izenberg accepts the concept unhesitatingly and adds the idea that sports are also barometers, that they indicate where we are going as a society. Izenberg, however, is very critical of the fact that sports can be "perverted" by self-seeking politicians and other people who try to mold the mirror to their liking.

The final article in Section Two deals with the enormous popularity of the Indianapolis 500 race. In the estimation of Jeff Greenfield, it is "not simply, or even primarily, the race that attracts the fans. It is the awesome, terrifying, hilarious spectacle surrounding the race." In this respect, Greenfield's analysis suggests the importance of the "big event" mentality that Paul and Dworkin examined in their articles on movies. And, like the authors of the other articles on sports, Greenfield sees the ritualistic aspects of Indy as central to its popularity.

KEY CONCEPTS

Movies as Cultural Indicators

The extent to which motion pictures accurately reflect American culture is a subject of heated debate among scholars. The reader article by Sklar, for instance, emphasizes that movies, while certainly offering periodic images of actual American life, are more consistently "about themselves." That is, what we see on the screen reflects the thinking of a small group of writers, directors, and producers and is more indicative of the peculiarities of "the industry" than of the nature of American society in general. This thesis suggests an interpretation similar to that in the article by Stein on the television elite in Section One. But, as Stein noted, those who fashion our entertainment inevitably reflect the social environment and, in this sense, are more representative than we might suppose.

Creators and producers do not exist in a vacuum; they are perhaps more in touch with the nature and tempo of American life than the average citizen because they are probably more sensitive and aware than most people. And, as Gans observed in his newspaper article, the architects of our entertainment—be it movies, television, or whatever—are acutely conscious of the "public mood" and generally cater to it. In this respect, movies, while not always providing a totally "accurate" mirror of American life (it may be argued that no aspect of the American social or cultural apparatus does), do indeed indicate many important features of our culture. They may, in fact, be very much like the "barometers" Izenberg sees in the sports world, offering sneak previews of what social and intellectual changes to expect in American culture in the future.

Audience Expectations and Business Considerations in the Motion Picture and Television Industries

As suggested by the discussion of the passive and active theories of popular culture in Section One, the question of audience expectations looms as a major consideration of the mass entertainment businesses. This has been particularly true of the motion picture and television industries during the past thirty years.

Before the advent of commercial television, movie studios responded to the question of audience expectations by offering a relatively large quantity of films that represented a wide range of subjects and forms (that is, the musical, the Western, the gangster and horror stories, and so forth). The object was to cater to the diversity of tastes in the audience and thus free the movie moguls from having to be, to use Gans' phrase, "nervous guessers" about what the public wants.

Television robbed the movies of their rather privileged place in popular culture. The new medium also became an important factor in the decline of the motion picture industry. Sklar's point about television coming of age in a suburban period has relevance to the discussion of audience expectations. Unlike movies, television brought entertainment right into the home, at a time when the family home was being invoked as the cornerstone of American society. The motion picture industry had to confront the reality of changing audience expectations. As Paul points out in his reader selection, the movie studios realized they could not compete with television, so they cultivated an

alliance with the new entertainment business during the 1950s.

The current state of the movie industry indicates that film, once thought to be an important mirror of American life by most observers, is increasingly out of touch with the expectations of the audience. The industry has been transformed from a vibrant, expansive business into a cautious enterprise looking for "bankable" stars and some formula for guaranteed success. In contrast, television has managed to maintain a closer relationship with the viewing public and functions as the medium that tells us, as Sklar points out, "who we are."

The Impact of Television on American Life

The movie industry was not the only aspect of American society to be profoundly influenced by the rise of television. Nearly every feature of American life has felt the tremendous effects television has produced. We all seem to agree that television has indeed had a major impact on our lives, but beyond that very general observation one of the most intense debates about popular culture rages on.

As Sklar indicates in his newspaper article, every technological innovation has produced a flood of controversy about its social effects. The automobile is perhaps the best example of a technological development that has been both hailed and condemned, in a manner very similar to the public reaction to television. With the current furor over the adverse effects of television, the positive effects of the medium are often ignored. The article by Schillaci, for example, speaks of the "deep sense of common humanity" engendered by the television series "Roots." In Section Three, an article by William Small discusses the value of television in the civil rights movement.

The increased political awareness and cosmopolitanism created by television seems, in the minds of many, to be more than offset by the danger the medium presents due to its pervasiveness in American society. One major point of contention is that television encourages passivity, as documented by the Waters article. The article by Shayon is particularly critical of the fact that "viewers, in the television-audience game, are passive receivers of messages rather than active participants in the shaping and the sending of the messages."

The most common criticism of television, of course, is that it is filled with violence and that this violent content has a definite shaping effect on the world view of those who watch it. The studies by Gerbner and Gross substantiate this point, emphasizing that the heavy viewer of violence on television tends to think that life is more dangerous than it really is. Again, this is nothing new in the history of popular culture. Dime novels in the 1860s and 1870s came under intense fire as being too violent. But it is certainly true that the potential of television to promote aggressiveness or foster fear and insecurity is much greater due to its pervasiveness.

Popular Music and American Dreams

As the two newspaper articles by Hentoff indicate, popular music can be interpreted as a medium that expresses the deeply held desires, aspirations, and dreams of the American people. Popular music is perhaps the most important form of mass entertainment in this regard. A popular song can express a simple, direct statement of the way people

feel. With the advantage of a catchy tune and lyrics that can be easily memorized, songs also serve as valuable reinforcement for the dreams of the people. By examining the makeup of these dreams, the student of popular culture can acquire important insights into the values and priorities of the American people.

It can be argued, of course, that professional musicians create popular songs for a mass market and that any significance popular music has as an expression of people's dreams is purely coincidental. (Nye and Browne in their Section One reader articles have previously discussed this criticism of popular culture.) While it is true that a highly sophisticated recording industry does indeed churn out songs for mass consumption, the popular music business, as Denisoff points out in his article, is at a loss to explain the reasons for a record's popularity. There is, in other words, no pat formula for success, which suggests that songs generally have to have some connection to the needs and aspirations of people, some meaning to their lives, in order to become popular.

It should be remembered that even the professional creators of popular culture are products of their social environment and historical circumstances. They may not always "speak for an age," but they are more representative of the American mind than many critics of popular culture would have us believe. In some cases, they are truly prophetic. This was clearly demonstrated by the rise of rock 'n' roll as a vital force in the emerging cultural rebellion of the fifties.

The Relationship of Popular Music to Cultural Rebellion

The reader articles on popular music are predominantly about rock 'n' roll because that is the musical form that has had the greatest social, political, and cultural ramifications during the past three decades. As the article by Belz brings out, rock 'n' roll was, in many respects, a true folk art becuase it originated as a response to the needs and desires of the people, at least of the young people, of the fifties. While the political activists of the sixties read into rock 'n' roll much more rebelliousness than it actually contained, the musical form was inherently a challenge to the values and attitudes of mainstream America, particularly in such areas as work, sex, and social-political authority. The Hentoff reader article suggests the scope of rock's inherent defiance of established cultural norms.

The basically apolitical defiance of rock began to coalesce with the political dissent injected into the music by such former "folk" musicians as Bob Dylan. By 1965 it had become evident that rock was to be the most important voice of the so-called counterculture, a development that will be discussed by the Pendleton article in Section Three.

In some respects the rebellion that rock 'n' roll tended to encourage and exploit helped to produce a kind of "backlash" against the music. The article by McCarthy, *et al.*, on country and western indicates the significance of that musical form in the late sixties and early seventies as a counterpoint to the messages and tone of rock. And the final article of the section on popular music shows just how far the counter-reaction against rock has taken us. The "prettiness" discussed by Hilburn is as far removed as it could possibly be from the main thrust of the earlier, more rebellious music of rock 'n' roll, with its emphasis on earthy, natural qualities and its disdain for the clean, sanitized world of the crooners such as Perry Como and Frank Sinatra.

Sports as Symbol and Ritual

The articles on sports in the reader are concerned with their importance as symbols for deeply held values and ideas and as rituals that help to provide a sense of order, security and, in the minds of observers like Novak, a religious quality in American society.

The "SportsWorld" mentality examined by Lipsyte is not peculiar to the world of athletics. It is, as Izenberg points out, only a mirror of our own thinking. This, in fact, is at the core of the popularity of sports: they reflect our faith in the strong individual, in the efficacy of competition, in the value of achievement and in the preferability of success, of winning. The SportsWorld is only a model of the American way of life.

Sports, however, do more than merely symbolize our ideas and behavior. They also offer a very attractive ritual in which spectators can participate vicariously and acquire a wide range of psychological benefits, from simple emotional release to a profound religious experience.

FACTUAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why, according to Sklar, is the dreamlike state induced by watching movies more satisfying than the actual dreams people have during sleep?

2. What social class constituted the major portion of motion picture audiences in the early years of the industry?

3. Why does Sklar, in his reader article, reject the mirror concept in relation to movies, and what metaphor does he substitute for it?

4. Why did movie studios change their attitudes toward television in the 1950s?

5. Why does William Paul assert that Hollywood currently "is on the lookout for the 'pre-sold' project"?

6. What does Dworkin mean when he says that "the film *Jaws* was to Edgartown what the shark was to 'Amity'"?

7. Why is it important, according to the newspaper article by Sklar, that television "became the primary medium of American popular culture during a suburban era"?

8. What are the two opposing views of what time period constitutes television's "Golden Age"?

9. In what ways, according to Gerbner and Gross, is television "different from all other media"?

10. What effects do Gerbner and Gross believe television violence has on "heavy viewers"?

11. How does television foster passivity?

12. What effects does exposure to commercials have on children and adolescents, according to Waters?

13. What criteria does Schillaci use to label "Roots" a "unique media event"?

14. What does Powers mean when he declares that the "eyewitness news" programs lack a "sense of *mission*"?

15. How do newspapers and television news programs differ, according to Powers, in their relationships to the communities they serve?

16. How does Shayon view television's relationship to the problem of individual identity, and what solution does he propose?

17. What differences does Hentoff see between traditional popular music and rock 'n' roll?

18. What were the "genteel" songs that originated in the mid-nineteenth century?

19. What are some of the key factors involved in the popular music tastes of people?

20. How, according to Belz, does the phenomenon of "one-shot successes" in the world of rock 'n' roll indicate the "essentially folk character" of the music?

21. What does Hentoff, in his reader selection, mean when he observes that "the pop charts have been democratized, miscegenated, deregionalized, unclassed"?

22. In what ways does country and western music reflect "liberal" as well as "conservative" ideas and sentiments?

23. Why does Hilburn consider the success of the Carpenters a harbinger of new trends in the popular music of the seventies?

24. How, according to Lipsyte's first newspaper article, does sports participation affect psychological development?

25. When and how, according to Lipsyte's second newspaper article, did Muhammad Ali, Billie Jean King, and Joe Namath become super heroes?

26. Why Does Lipsyte, in his reader article, believe that "the sports experience" in America has been "perverted into a SportsWorld state of mind"?

27. What cultural values, according to Real, are reflected by the Super Bowl ritual?

28. How do the ancient Olympic games serve as a precedent for the nature of American sports today?

29. How does Izenberg describe the half-time show at the 1971 Super Bowl?

30. What, according to Greenfield, is the main attraction of the Indianapolis 500 for the fans?

ESSAY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Examine the relationship between motion pictures and television during the past thirty years.**

   Suggested Guidelines

   1. Consider the information presented in the Sklar newspaper articles.
   2. Carefully analyze the points made by Paul in his reader article.
   3. Do a comparative evaluation of your own attraction, or lack of attraction, to both motion pictures and television.

2. **Evaluate the positive and negative effects of television on American society.**

   Suggested Guidelines

   1. Assess the material presented by Gerbner and Gross, Shayon, Powers, and Waters on the negative aspects of television viewing.
   2. Consider the suggestions of the medium's beneficial effects in the newspaper article by Sklar and the reader article by Schillaci.
   3. Do an analytical study of your personal viewing habits and correlate them with those of the typical "light" and "heavy" viewers.

3. **Discuss the significance of rock 'n' roll music to the development of the cultural rebellion of the fifties and sixties.**

   Suggested Guidelines

   1. Evaluate the material presented by Belz and Hentoff on the origins of rock 'n' roll.
   2. Consider the points made by Hentoff, in his reader article, on the importance of rock to the counterculture.
   3. Note the significance of country and western and the recent trends in popular music as reactions to the cultural rebellion associated with rock.

4. **Examine the ways in which the world of sports functions as a kind of "civil religion."**

   Suggested Guidelines

   1. Determine what characteristics constitute a "religion."
   2. Using your knowledge of American history and what you have learned from Section One, evaluate the tendency of Americans to endorse secular or civil religions.
   3. Study the points made by the newspaper and reader articles relevant to this theme (especially those by Novak and Izenberg).
   4. Give serious thought to what spectator sports mean in your own life.

SECTION THREE:

POPULAR CULTURE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES	READER SELECTIONS
11. *Politics and Popular Culture* Andrew Hacker	*The Pseudo-Event* Daniel Boorstin *The Inside of the Outside* Tony Schwartz *Political Campaigns: TV Power Is a Myth* Thomas E. Patterson and Robert D. McClure *Politics in the Movies* Gerald Mast *Television and the Black Revolution* William Small
12. *Popular Culture: Minorities and the Media* Nathan Irvin Huggins	*Blacks on TV: A Replay of Amos 'n' Andy!* J. K. Obatala *To Find an Image* James P. Murray *Puerto Ricans in American Films* Edward Mapp *Another Red Man Bit the Dust* George N. Fenin and William K. Everson *The Media and the Ethnics* Csanad Toth

13. *Popular Culture: Mirror of Women Moving*
Betty Friedan

Television and the Feminine Mystique
Betty Friedan

The Big Lie
Molly Haskell

The Lady as Jock
Shelley Armitage

Does Rock Degrade Women?
Marion Meade

14. *Popular Culture and American Life-Styles*
Bennett M. Berger

Poker and the American Dream
Rex L. Jones

The Happy Mediocrity
Elaine Kendall

Fashion as New Self
Truman E. Moore

The Life-Style Rebellion
John Pendleton

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To understand

- ☐ the influence of the mass media on the political process
- ☐ the importance of television to the civil rights movement
- ☐ the historical tendency of popular culture to perpetuate false or demeaning stereotypes of ethnic minorities
- ☐ the unrealistic and damaging portraits of women in popular culture
- ☐ the effect of popular culture on the women's liberation movement
- ☐ the manner in which diversions, eating habits, and fashion trends reflect basic American values and priorities
- ☐ the significance of popular culture to the emergence of the counterculture

OVERVIEW

This section concerns the role of popular culture in the process of social change. The significance of popular culture to politics, ethnic minorities, women, and life-styles is explored in this context.

Politics

The first newspaper article in Section Three, by Andrew Hacker, outlines some of the problems inherent in the "awkward" alliance of popular culture and politics. Hacker notes that political themes and characters in entertainment tend to be contrived and shallow. He also makes the point, in a manner similar to Handlin's complaint about the lack of audience participation in modern popular culture, that people have much less first-hand experience with politics than they did in the nineteenth century. Hacker echoes Powers' critique of television news in saying that political awareness is not furthered by a medium that concentrates on the superficial and the sensational.

The first reader article in Section Three deals with the phenomenon of "pseudo-events" in the news-gathering professions. Daniel Boorstin, much like Powers, claims that the main criterion of most news gatherers is not whether something is "real," but simply "is it newsworthy?" The student should recall Denney's article on the rise of the sensationalist press in the late nineteenth century to note that this is hardly a new tendency. Particularly noteworthy in Boorstin's article is his assertion that politicians, like the former Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin, can literally build a career by manipulating the "pseudo-events" they create in concert with journalists.

The reader article by Tony Schwartz gives an insider's view of the use of television in political campaigning. A noted media ad-

viser, Schwartz has faith in the power of television. His optimism, however, runs counter to some of the points made by Thomas E. Patterson and Robert D. McClure in the next article.

Like Boorstin, Patterson and McClure take a dim view of the ability of the news-reporting enterprises to inform the public about political issues. The authors concentrate on this failing in television, a medium that epitomizes the popular cultural fascination with superficial images and constant action. Patterson and McClure offer as documentation a detailed study of the role of television in the 1972 presidential campaign.

Gerald Mast looks at the motion picture portrayal of politics in his selection. Mast notes that most of the stories are little more than simplistic morality plays in which good inevitably triumphs over evil. Recent films have introduced a stronger strain of cynicism but, according to Mast, the moralistic movie mentality still persists.

Unlike the previous authors on politics, William Small gives a great deal of credit to television as a vital force in social change. He deals specifically with the civil rights movement. Without the assistance of the pervasive medium, black efforts toward freedom and equality may not have secured as many tangible gains in so short a time. The black struggle was so quintessentially dramatic and so rife with moral fervor that it proved to be both fascinating and troubling to white America, much in the manner of the impact of *Roots*. Television has made it difficult for whites to ignore the plight of blacks in American society.

Ethnic Minorities

The newspaper article by Nathan Irvin Huggins, which begins the section on ethnic minorities, also deals with the relationship of the media to the struggle for equality. The author is somewhat pessimistic about the usefulness of popular culture in advancing the cause of social equality. He notes that the current spate of situation comedies about minorities "are now serving mass media's good-natured indulgence in ethnic humor just as Jewish and Italian Americans have been doing for years." Huggins admits that considerable progress has been made in the last fifteen years, but he bemoans the difficulty faced by talented ethnics in breaking into an entertainment industry that seems to want only established stars from the ranks of minority groups. He is particularly critical of the fact that whites "define whatever ethnic content will get aired." The article by Gans in Section One detailed the characteristics of those who create our popular culture, so it should not be surprising that almost all the content of entertainment offerings has a distinctly white, middle-aged, male point-of-view.

J. K. Obatala's reader selection is more sympathetic with the creators of popular culture. The author refutes the charge that a program such as "Sanford and Son" is simply a throwback to the days of "Amos 'n' Andy." Indeed, he even sees a great deal of value in that supposedly racist program. He points out that the stereotypes of blacks in popular culture have a basis in fact, but the problem is that the stereotypes have come to be the defining identity for *all* blacks. Like most of the authors of articles on both minorities and women, Obatala is hopeful that blacks will become more active in creating positive images of themselves in popular culture.

In contrast to Obatala, the reader selection by James Murray has a harsher attitude toward the stereotypes promulgated by popu-

lar culture, in this case movies. He laments the fact that the white movie moguls spread damaging messages of white superiority, but he is especially critical of the fact that blacks were so effectively excluded from films. And those that did appear were always cast as "cowardly, subservient, obsequious, lazy." Unlike Obatala, Murray contends that blacks did not identify with these unrealistic and demeaning types. It was Tarzan, not the African natives, whom blacks cheered in the movie theaters, according to Murray.

The article by Edward Mapp on Puerto Ricans in films is similar to the previous one on blacks. Mapp notes that despite Jose Ferrer's Oscar in 1951, there have been very few triumphs for Puerto Ricans in films, a medium in which they still remain "mostly shadow and little substance." Although Mapp implies that Puerto Ricans can help to change this situation by more active involvement in the movie industry, he indicates that he has seen little to make his outlook more optimistic.

George N. Fenin and William K. Everson's article deals with the stereotypical treatment of Native Americans in movies, but there are some important differences between the way in which Indians have been portrayed and the way other minorities have been pictured. In the early twentieth century, the American Indian was actually cast as a hero, but always, as the authors point out, as more of a symbol than an individual. Then, from about 1910 to 1950, the characterizations of Indians lost most of their admirable qualities. It is interesting to note, however, that as early as 1950 the pendulum was definitely swinging the other way, at a time when all other ethnic minorities were still receiving unfavorable treatment in popular culture.

Women

The final article on ethnic minorities by Csanad Toth concerns the much-ignored "silent majority" ethnic type, who is neither nonwhite nor poor (although not rich), and is seldom seen protesting anything. Toth, of Eastern European ancestry, sees almost no evidence that the media is even aware of these ethnics and their unique cultures. This "pervasive neglect" has created serious problems for those who wish to preserve their ethnic identity in American society, according to Toth.

Betty Friedan's newspaper article begins the section on women in popular culture. She observes that the women's movement, in some respects, can be construed as a massive reaction against the portrayal of women in popular culture. The black revolution discussed by Small also, according to Friedan, had a powerful effect on many women who were inspired to protest their situation in American society. Friedan is generally optimistic about current trends in the mass media, especially after noting how bad the situation was for women only a decade ago.

This unhealthy and potentially damaging situation is detailed in Friedan's reader selection. Written in 1964, this article has none of the hopefulness she expresses in her newspaper article. Based on a study of television programs and commercials, Friedan's piece reads like an indictment of the industry. She is particularly puzzled by the fact that television had supposedly become the medium that catered to the average housewife. She just could not accept the assertion that the electronic box was giving these women the kind of content they really wanted, and she worried about what effect the demeaning portraits of women would

have on both the sexes. The article by Gross on advertising in Section One had many of the same complaints about commercials, so it should be noted that human beings in general are not treated with much respect by those who seem interested only in making a buck.

Molly Haskell's article deals with the "Big Lie" of women's inferiority perpetuated by movies. She contends that the movie industry "maneuvered to keep women in their place," but that, ironically, women achieved heights of wealth and prestige in motion pictures that would be almost unthinkable in any other facet of American life. In fact, the great female movie stars, who almost never sacrificed love for a career in films, did so all the time in real life. Thus, the discrepancy between film images and social reality helped to generate support for the women's movement, according to Haskell. Sklar's reader article in Section Two, of course, makes the point that most features of American life were not too accurately portrayed by movies.

The selection by Shelley Armitage looks at the progress women have made in professional athletics. She observes that, in spite of strict cultural conditioning, women have managed to break many social barriers and excel in the world of sports. Like the articles by Lipsyte in Section Two, the selection by Armitage details the difficult road women must travel in overcoming the sexism of American culture. The passage of Title IX has been a boon to women's sports, the author points out, but we are still a long way from achieving any kind of equality between the sexes in athletics.

Marion Meade sees little to applaud in the manner in which women are treated by the world of rock music. She is particularly critical of the lyrics of musicians such as Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones, who picture women in a variety of unflattering ways. She notes the irony of the fact that rock played such a central role in the rebellion against middle-class values but that it has never freed itself from the grip of male chauvinism.

Life-Styles

The section on life-styles begins with the newspaper article by Bennett M. Berger, who offers a good definition of what a "life-style" is. Some of his comments are similar to what Gans discussed in his newspaper article in Section One. Berger focuses on the counterculture as an example of a life-style and taste culture that could be understood in terms of the people who comprised it and the backgrounds they came from. He observes that the counterculture as a movement has lost some intensity but that its impact is very obvious in many aspects of contemporary American society. Berger concludes by noting that a major problem in popular culture, due to the diversity of life-styles and social groups, is to strike a balance between cultural pluralism and a common identity as Americans. This theme will also be explored by Alvin Toffler in his newspaper article in Section Four.

One common value held by many Americans has been a belief in the American Dream. To Rex Jones, poker epitomizes the American Dream, with its emphasis on chance, equality of opportunity, and the crucial importance of individual effort. Indeed, as his article points out, many people look to poker as one of the few, perhaps the only, opportunity to pursue the American Dream. This might help explain poker's popularity among its estimated 47 million players. As

the newspaper article by Browne in Section One pointed out, the idea of the American Dream is still a central element of our national faith.

Eating habits represent another important facet of American life-styles. The selection by Elaine Kendall examines the meaning of the astronomical increase in the number of fast food establishments during the last two decades. The article singles out the McDonald's hamburger chain as representative of this trend in American popular culture and analyzes the implications of the American embrace of "consensus food."

Along with their desire for the "instant," most Americans, argues Truman Moore in his reader selection, have an almost insatiable appetite for the "new." This "nouveaumania," as Moore calls it, is most evident in fashion trends. The author considers the sixties a key decade in the acceleration of this tendency toward nouveaumania because it was a time of rapid social change and a time when "style" was construed to be an important symbol of one's value system.

The final article in Section Three examines the rise of the counterculture, a movement previously discussed by Nat Hentoff in his reader selection in Section Two. John Pendleton views the emergence of the counterculture as essentially a life-style rebellion. Like Berger, in his newspaper article, Pendleton locates some of the important features of the counterculture and the factors that gave rise to this trend in American society. The importance of popular culture to this movement is also discussed. The fact that popular artists used their particular medium to condemn American society indicated that they had departed from the noncontroversial stance of most popular culture, a quality discussed by Nye in Section One.

KEY CONCEPTS

The Importance of Image in Political Life

The controversy over violence in television is nearly matched in intensity by the argument over what effects the image-conscious mass media has on political life. It has become commonplace to speak of politicians using the media to enhance their prestige. The most common reference is to John F. Kennedy, especially his dramatic "win" over Richard Nixon in the 1960 televised debates. But some important studies indicate that the "image" is not as important as we think. Amercians do have more laudable reasons for selecting a candidate. The article by Patterson and McClure, based on intensive research and interviews, makes precisely this point.

Perhaps the most accurate statement to make is that the mass media does indeed promote superficial images and an action format in their treatment of political life, but these presentations can have a variety of effects on those who watch them. It should be remembered that such factors as party affiliation and personal life-style priorities have much to do with a voter's choice of a candidate. The best that the media can do is to provide exposure for a politician. In this sense, it is true that those who can attract

media attention have definite advantages in reaching the public with their messages. But this is not the same thing as saying that voters buy "prepackaged" candidates and that the image, the appearance, is paramount in their "purchase." The debate over the role of image simply points up the problem scholars have in determining how the content of the mass media is received by the audience.

The Function of the Mass Media in Political Protest Movements

Like the discussion of image, the question of what effects mass media have on political protest movements is a difficult one. Political activists such as Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman have tended to believe that television, for instance, can be a potent weapon in the social protest struggles. It can flash dramatic pictures of demonstrations, such as the one that occurred in 1968 during the Democratic Convention in Chicago, to people who may have previously been unaware of a protest movement. This is, of course, true, but to say that the pictures of dissent can "radicalize" someone is something else. Many people, in fact, were so outraged by the actions of the demonstrators that they lost what little sympathy they may have had for the protestors.

Despite the assertions of those like William Small, in his reader selection, many observers feel the mass media are inherently injurious to protest movements. They base their assumption on what they see as the tendency of the media to concentrate on the most flamboyant aspects of the movement. Of course, as Betty Friedan pointed out in her newspaper article, protestors can manipulate the media by understanding this sensationalist propensity of most news gatherers. But "playing along" with the media runs the risk of invalidating the credibility of protest movements in the minds of some. And there are those, like social theorist Herbert Marcuse, who believe that the media siphons off all meaningful dissent and renders it ineffective by making it a popular cultural commodity. This theme was discussed in the "passive" versus "active" theories of popular culture introduced in Section One.

The Problem of Ethnic Identity

The problem of ethnic identity in American society is a very serious one, as regards the role of popular culture. As Huggins (and Gans before him) pointed out, those who create and produce popular culture are overwhelmingly from the white middle and upper middle classes. They define what ethnics are for Americans. The articles in Section Three on minorities have detailed just how damaging this has been for blacks, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and others seeking social equality who have suffered greatly at the hands of the popular culture creators and producers.

The solution to the problem, according to most of the articles, is for ethnic minorities to assert themselves and become more active in popular culture. This is easier said than done. One major stumbling block is money. It takes a great deal of financial backing to produce a television program or a motion picture, and most minority group members lack the resources for such projects. Another obstacle is the difficulty for minorities to break into the creative positions in popular culture. Progress is being made, but it is so slow in coming it could have the effect of discouraging many ethnic minorities in their pursuit of careers in entertainmen .

The Image of Women in Popular Culture

Women have been portrayed in an array of images, but in almost all of them women are seen as subservient to men. Even in some of the "tough" women parts given to Mae West, Joan Crawford, and Katharine Hepburn, the idea of living one's life for a man managed to creep in. The article by Molly Haskell on films indicates the scarcity of realistic and admirable characterizations of women in the movies. Even today, very few aspects of mass entertainment do justice to the contributions of women and their varied experiences in American society.

Again, we must return to the problem of who creates and produces popular culture. As in the case of ethnic minorities, it is not surprising to find demeaning stereotypes or unrealistic portrayals of women in an entertainment industry dominated by men. Until more women create and produce stories about themselves, the situation may not change appreciably. Betty Friedan is optimistic about current trends, but so much more needs to be done.

It can be argued, however, that not only women and ethnic minorities, but most of American society is not adequately or accurately portrayed by popular culture—that popular culture is not a very reliable mirror of American life. This concern is aggravated by the fact that popular culture today is almost entirely disseminated through the mass media, which, as Handlin pointed out in Section One, further removes the entertainer from the entertained. In this sense, women are only feeling the effects of a traditional problem inherent in mass-produced popular culture. However, they are more victimized because images of women in popular culture have been so uniformly unfavorable, while men have been accorded both positive and negative representations.

Life-style Patterns as Windows into the "American Mind"

The style of life adopted by people has significance beyond its description of patterns of living. The way people dress, their eating habits, and their tastes in a host of other areas are fairly reliable indexes of the way they think. By observing life-style trends in American society in general, it is possible to make some educated generalizations about the makeup of the so-called American mind.

There is, of course, no actual "collective consciousness" observable in American culture, but there are many common values and attitudes that underlie the "American Way of Life." The article by Pendleton, as well as the Section One newspaper article by Browne, detail some of these values and attitudes. Just as the choice of a type of entertainment necessarily says something about one's tastes, so does a particular style of living say a great deal about one's basic priorities. While it may be argued that clothing and eating habits are trivial matters, there is much evidence to indicate that Americans "define themselves" as much by these supposedly meaningless things as they do by choosing a form of entertainment, subscribing to a particular religion, or supporting a political party. The articles on life-styles in this section illustrate how much we can learn from examining these facets of American life.

The Counterculture

The idea of the counterculture is significant in the discussion of American life-styles. As the article by Pendleton points out,

the counterculture movement was somewhat unique because of its strong concentration on life-style patterns. As Berger's newspaper article observes, the counterculture, in many respects, began as an unorganized rebellion against the tendency of white, middle-class culture to "program" children into certain acceptable ways of living. The suburban-corporate image was rejected by millions of young Americans, who sought a more meaningful, "authentic" existence. Many of them turned to the culture of the "out groups" in American society—blacks, American Indians, drug cultists, political radicals—for inspiration and instruction on how to forge alternative life-styles.

The counterculture is important beyond its historical value. We can definitely see evidence of its impact today. As Berger points out, such characteristics as liberalized sexual attitudes, the use of marijuana and other outlawed drugs, more expressive clothing, and a greater concern with harmonizing with the natural environment and relating more "meaningfully" with other people attest to the lasting effects of the counterculture on American society.

FACTUAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How does Hacker view the importance of popular music to politics?
2. How does Hacker characterize the general public reaction to the televised presidential debates?
3. What is a "pseudo-event"?
4. What is the significance of the term "news release" to the rise of the pseudo-event tendency of the news-gathering professions?
5. What does Schwartz mean when he says that "it is much more important for a voter to feel a candidate than to see him"?
6. What do Patterson and McClure say about the assertion that "images" win more votes than either issues or parties?
7. What is Patterson's and McClure's assessment of the effectiveness of the five-minute political "spot" commercials?
8. How did Frank Capra's films epitomize the standard portrayal of politics in motion pictures?

9. Does Mast believe that movie attitudes toward politics are consistent with the general public orientation toward political life?

10. In what ways, according to Small, did television serve as an ally for the black revolution?

11. What significance does Small see in the increasing number of blacks in television commercials?

12. How does Huggins view the value of ethnic situation comedies to the understanding of the social problems of minorities?

13. What does Huggins mean when he says that "media exposure has cut both ways" in the black revolution?

14. Why does Obatala believe that those who played the black stereotype roles "served the cause of equality"?

15. What suggestions does Obatala offer for blacks to strive for equality in the entertainment industry?

16. Why does Murray believe that demeaning black stereotypes in films "did more to reinforce the attitudes of whites than they did to injure the self-image of blacks"?

17. How does Mapp assess the importance of the film *West Side Story* to the progress of Puerto Ricans in motion pictures?

18. How did film portrayals of Indians change after 1950?

19. What does Toth mean when he declares that ethnicity suffers in the mass media from "pervasive neglect"?

20. According to Friedan's newspaper article, what effect did the media coverage of the black revolution have on many women?

21. How does Friedan view magazines such as *Viva* and *Playgirl*?

22. What does Friedan, in her reader article, see as the main features of the portrayals of women in daytime soap operas?

23. What is the "Big Lie" Molly Haskell discusses in her reader selection?

24. What does Haskell feel our attitude today should be toward the film stereotypes of women in the past?

25. What were the three basic areas in which popularization of competitive athletics for women occurred?

26. What is the "femininity game" discussed by Armitage?

27. How, according to the selection by Meade, did rock lyrics change from the fifties to the sixties in their portrayal of women?

28. Why are the roots of rock 'n' roll important in the prevailing notion of masculine supremacy reflected through the music?

29. How does Berger, in his newspaper article, interpret the counterculture "in terms of the social backgrounds and circumstances of the people who shared it"?

30. How, according to Jones, is poker "a pure expression of the American dream"?

31. Why does Kendall see little hope that the "consensus food" trend will be reversed?

32. How, according to Moore, is the American love of youthfulness mirrored in the "nouveaumania" of American culture?

33. Why was the American dream of success attacked by young people in the fifties and sixties?

34. What is the significance of the "first television generation" to the emergence of the life-style rebellion?

ESSAY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Discuss the effectiveness of popular culture in increasing the political awareness of the American people.**

   Suggested Guidelines

   1. Consider the points made by Hacker and Boorstin on the tendency of popular culture to present superficial treatments of politics.
   2. Examine the ideas of Schwartz and the evidence presented by Patterson and McClure on the impact of the mass media on the voters.
   3. Note the arguments made by Small on the effectiveness of television in the black revolution.

4. Evaluate your own reasons for liking or disliking certain politicians, and for taking particular stands on specific issues in an attempt to discern possible media influence on your ideas and attitudes.

2. Compare and contrast the image and role of blacks in popular culture with that of other ethnic minorities.

Suggested Guidelines

1. Determine what characteristics have traditionally been assigned to the various ethnic minorities in the popular cultural stereotypes of them.
2. Analyze the material and opinions presented in the articles on minorities, particularly noting Toth's observations on the "silent majority" ethnic.
3. Draw up lists of the minority group members that you are aware of in popular culture and make a comparative analysis of them.

3. Examine the key elements in the traditional composite portrait of women in popular culture and discuss the alterations that have been made in this image in recent years.

Suggested Guidelines

1. Note the traditional tendencies of popular culture, discussed by the Friedan, Haskell, and Meade reader articles, in promoting demeaning images of women.
2. Examine the points made by Friedan, in her newspaper article, and Armitage, in her reader selection, on recent trends relevant to this subject.
3. Compare the popular cultural portrayal of women with your own conceptions of the status of women in American society.

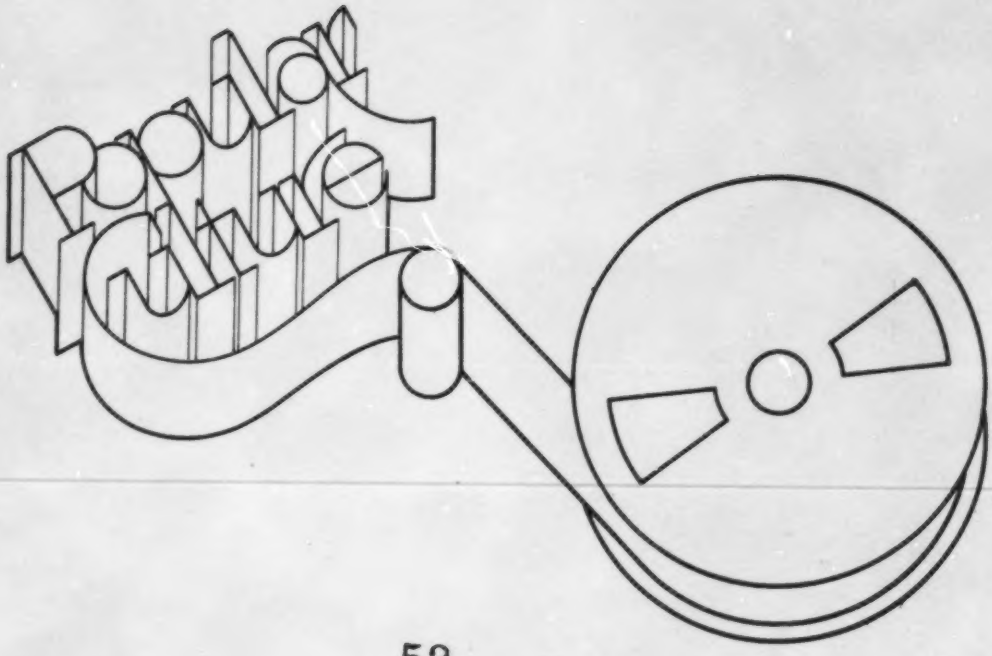
4. Outline the basic values and behavioral patterns inherent in the American Way of Life and analyze the challenges made to them by the counterculture.

Suggested Guidelines

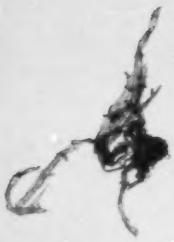
1. Note the article by Pendleton in order to acquire an understanding of the American Way of Life.
2. Analyze the key features of American life alluded to in the Jones, Kendall, and Moore articles.
3. Consider the points made by Pendleton and Berger on the emergence of the counterculture.

SECTION FOUR:

THE FUTURE OF POPULAR CULTURE



NEWSPAPER ARTICLE	READER SELECTIONS
15. *The Death of the Mass Media!* Alvin Toffler	*The Electronic Community* Kas Kalba
	The Untouchable Wonders Shepherd Mead
	About a Secret Crocodile R. A. Lafferty
	So You Think TV Is Hot Stuff! Erik Barnouw



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To understand

- ☐ the changes taking place in the mass media
- ☐ the growing trend toward cultural diversity reflected in new communications advances
- ☐ the technological innovations that will transform television into a sophisticated system of communications
- ☐ the problems confronting the development of new communications systems
- ☐ the challenge facing the "software" people in providing meaningful pastimes for the new "hardware" of the future

OVERVIEW

The final section in this course concerns the future development of popular culture and what possible effects this development will have on our lives.

The newspaper article by Alvin Toffler analyzes the changes that have already taken place in the mass media. Toffler points to the virtual extinction of mass market magazines as an indication of a new trend toward greater cultural selectivity. The abundance of regional and specialized magazines would seem to confirm his assessment, although the success of *People* magazine illustrates that the old format has not completely died. In many respects, as Toffler points out, popular culture seems to be returning to a preindustrial quality, to a time when heterogeneity rather than homogeneity was the rule. Even television, which Toffler calls "the great standardizing medium," is on the brink of radical alterations. And, it should be remembered, television is still a relatively primitive medium. In essence, Toffler sees the changes taking place in popular culture as representative of a broad and worldwide phenomenon of increasing social, political, and cultural diversity.

The first reader article in Section Four concerns the future of television. According to Kas Kalba, it is inevitable that the households of tomorrow will include communications systems that offer a wide array of entertainment and services, from a videotape recorder and playback machine to a remote learning and shopping terminal. Kalba also ponders the consequences of technological advancement. He points out that there is sharp disagreement over whether the telecommunications revolution will prove a benefit or will render humans slaves to their machines. But, as Kalba declares, the future is dependent on us. Only by concern and involvement in decision making that will profoundly affect their lives can Americans determine the kind of future they want.

The article by Shepherd Mead asserts that we already have great technical capabilities, but that political bureaucracy in the form of

"red tape" and unfairly restrictive laws is preventing the United States from putting them to use. In a manner similar to Kalba's analysis, Mead argues that only by working through the political system can we insure that the technical advances already developed can be implemented.

R. A. Lafferty's intriguing story of the "Secret Crocodile," that "controls the attitudes and dispositions of the world," presents a rather sobering Orwellian vision of the future. In contrast to the generally favorable attitude toward technology exhibited by Kalba, Mead, and Barnouw, Lafferty constructs a scenario in which a powerful organization that "manufactures all the catchwords and slogans of the world" is being threatened by three human beings who refuse to be taken in by the "official" way of talking and thinking. In the end, the Crocodile manages to save itself from the danger of the secret society of three that would not "go along." It takes very little extrapolation to see the implications of Lafferty's science-fiction piece for our own society in which elite groups exert enormous power over the images and ideas transmitted to us.

The final selection discusses the fact that we are on the threshold of great technological advances in communication. Like Kalba and Mead, Erik Barnouw illustrates that "the future is already here." He zeroes in on specific elements of this new technology, such as the optical fiber on which laser beams can travel and "carry innumerable streams of communication simultaneously in both directions." Barnouw also discusses the computers, satellites, cassettes, and other technological marvels that will transform our personal and social lives. Barnouw seems to have confidence that the "hardware" people can deliver their creations, but he wonders whether the "software" people, those who must fashion the content to be disseminated, can effectively keep up with the rapid pace of technology.

KEY CONCEPTS

The Telecommunications Revolution

Most observers are in general agreement that we have already entered the first stage of what will prove to be the most far-reaching technological transformation in the field of mass communications. The phrase "telecommunications revolution" is often used to describe this movement that is currently taking shape. Most of the discussions center on the role of television as the crucial medium in the new home communications centers of tomorrow. The advent of cable TV, cassettes, and videotape recorder and playback machines indicates that the changes are already occurring.

Obstacles to Technological Progress

Unfortunately, at least from the viewpoint of the advocates of new technology, there are some serious obstacles to new advances in the field of communications. The situation in cable TV, outlined by Mead, is only one example. Like many other agencies in government, the Federal Communications Commission feels the heat of powerful broadcasting interest groups who oppose such things as cable TV because they perceive them as threats to their dominance in the arena of communications. While this may be true to a certain extent, it is also being argued that those who operate the major television networks, for instance, are well placed to reap enormous profits and to gain added power from their involvement with new technological forms of communication. The history of popular culture is rife with incidents of established media resisting new developments in the field.

Cultural Diversity

The newspaper article by Toffler and the reader articles by Kalba and Barnouw bring out the point that the telecommunications revolution may very well create a great deal more diversity in our culture. Toffler, for one, believes the diversity that is being generated in popular culture is merely symptomatic of a larger phenomenon of social fragmentation, ethnic diversity, and political decentralization throughout the world. Kalba and Barnouw indicate that the new home communications systems will enable individuals to literally "talk back," to be more involved in their entertainment and their technological pastimes.

The question arises, however, as to what effects this individualization and the related trend toward privatism will really have on our culture. Will diversity for individuals, in other words, really carry over into interpersonal and social relations? Will individuals even have much social contact at all in a future that promises gadgets that enable people to function in all areas of life without ever leaving home? Rather than accepting the facile assumption that a greater number and variety of cultural offerings necessarily leads to great diversity in culture at large, students of popular culture should examine all facets of contemporary American life and try to speculate about just what effects, both positive and negative, new forms of technology will have on the entire spectrum of our society.

FACTUAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does Toffler mean by "the de-massification of the mass media"?
2. Why, in Toffler's estimation, did *Life, Look,* and the *Saturday Evening Post* discontinue publication?
3. What does Toffler believe will be the end results of the de-massification of the mass media?
4. In what respect, according to Kalba, do the two perspectives of our communications future converge?
5. What are the five ways in which television will be technologically transformed into the "home communications center of tomorrow"?
6. What social transformations have been caused by, as well as contributed to, the trend toward more individualistic and selective television viewing patterns?
7. How will television become an increasingly important part of the community environment of the future?
8. What are the three types of cable networks suggested by Peter Goldmark, as discussed in the Mead article?
9. Why, according to Mead, are the technological advances in communications systems not being implemented to any widespread extent?
10. What future uses could communications satellites be put to?
11. What does Mead propose that could allow maximum development of new communications systems?
12. What is the "Secret Crocodile" Lafferty writes about?
13. What is an "optical fiber"?
14. What is meant by "hardware" and "software" people in the language of telecommunications?
15. Is Barnouw essentially optimistic or pessimistic about the "telecommunications revolution"?

ESSAY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Discuss the problems confronting the development of new communications systems.**

   Suggested Guidelines

   1. Review the article by Mead.
   2. Use the knowledge and insights you have acquired from studying the first three sections to determine whether the American people will be enthusiastic about new technological advances in the field of communications.

2. **Discuss the possible effects the "telecommunications revolution" will have on the nature and quality of American life.**

   Suggested Guidelines

   1. Study the arguments of Kalba and Barnouw.
   2. Consider the possibilities suggested by Lafferty's fictional account.
   3. Determine what the phrase "quality of life" means to you and to other Americans.
   4. Recall some of the previous articles on the effects technology has had on American society.